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Dear David Cameron

We are writing with respect to the National Security Strategy (NSS) review and the Defence and Security Review (DSR), both of which are scheduled to be published following the 2015 General Election. We do so in light of the report of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee (DC), *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review*, (HC 197), published on 7 January, to which several of us submitted evidence, and the Government's response, published on 26 March. We understand that the recommendations of this report will be the subject of a parliamentary debate in the coming months.

We urge you to ensure that the NSS and DSR processes help to shape the UK's strategy in the world in a coherent manner. In summary, we believe:

- 1) At this time of flux, there is a need to address some fundamental questions that have been neglected in the past, in particular the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and threats to security.
- 2) There is a need to be honest about the UK's capability to contribute to tackling security challenges, and the Government needs to be prepared to change its approach, not simply focusing on dealing with the symptoms of insecurity.
- 3) This discussion needs to be frank, inclusive and (as far as possible) take place in the public realm.
- 4) The DSR needs to sit clearly and transparently within the NSS, with its decisions justified by reference to the NSS.

Asking the right questions. We urge a twin-track approach to the NSS. As the DC report recommends (para 37), the NSS review should start by asking afresh what the UK's role in the world should be "as the basis for any consideration of the next Defence and Security Review". The 'strategic pause' after this year's withdrawal from Afghanistan presents an ideal opportunity to examine the current UK approach, which has prioritised force projection and military intervention, given that such an approach has brought about neither the stable democracies that it had hoped to encourage nor the demise of jihadist insurgency and terrorism.

Secondly, as was done in 2010, the NSS should look at all kinds of threats to UK security, not only those which are military. The 2015 NSS should examine the deeper roots underlying these threats, and consider what contributes to and exacerbates them. It should also look at how changes to the UK's role in the world might in turn have an impact on threats to UK security.

Scheduling the NSS and DSR. It is vital that the NSS should steer the implementation of national security decisions in a clear and transparent manner. There should be no presumption that the solutions to the threats it identifies are military or that the Ministry of Defence should take the lead in tackling them.

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The DSR process must sit within the broader NSS, the conclusions of which should shape the DSR. The UK's security and procurement policies should be determined by a clear view of the UK's role in the world as well as an assessment of threats to its interests. A premature DSR could see spending commitments made that are inappropriate to meeting today's and the future's security challenges, particularly if these challenges require the reallocation of resources from the MoD to other departments, for example (topically) from developing new nuclear-armed submarines or building and operating new aircraft carriers towards environmental work to minimise flood risks or greater support for renewable energy development.

Encouraging a wide debate. The NSS review should not only take the opportunity to look long-term, but every effort should be made to promote public debate on the security risk assessment and subsequently proposed strategic responses. This should be as open a process as possible, given that it is a subject which affects everyone. We note that the DC report has recommended (para 84) "the widest consultation on the next NSS" and the publication of a National Security Green Paper to frame formal comment. Input should be solicited from across Government, from civil society and academia. For instance, scientific and technical institutions could provide vital expertise on climate and environmental change, food security, cyber and systems security, etc. We are concerned by the implication in the Government response that the main focus of public engagement should be to "increase popular support" for the current military priorities.

It is unrealistic to expect that the "official histories" of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as recommended by the DC report (para 76), will be completed in time to inform this debate. However, we welcome the recommendation that such official military histories be informed by diplomatic (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and development (Department for International Development) perspectives to reflect the 'comprehensive approach' to stabilisation operations. It is also imperative that these and other operations be assessed in the strategic context of the 'war on terror' and UK efforts to counter violent extremism, and that lessons are learned and implemented.

We hope that you consider our points and that there will be much discussion of these issues. We look forward to your response. We are sending similar letters to Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg, as well as making the text publicly available.

Best wishes,

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Ann Feltham, Parliamentary Co-ordinator, Campaign Against Arms Trade
Kate Hudson, General Secretary, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Chris Cole, Director, Drone Wars UK
Millius Palayiwas, Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation
Douglas Parr, Chief Scientist and Policy Director, Greenpeace UK
Steven Hendry, Chair, Nuclear Information Service
Richard Reeve, Director - Sustainable Security Programme, Oxford Research Group
Pat Gaffney, General Secretary, Pax Christi
Helen Drewery, General Secretary, Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Jehangir Sarosh, Executive Director, Religions for Peace UK Chapter
Stuart Parkinson, Executive Director, Scientists for Global Responsibility
John Hilary, Executive Director, War on Want
Nick Dearden, Director, World Development Movement